"a myth in print is dead" so
i wanted my own story, living

I have always used songs to tell stories that aren't true, but I need to be. A lie that heals. It's in the retelling of the story you know didn't go your way; the bandage for a story that is true but you cannot live with.

Here: a narrative where you did come out on top. A narrative where things do turn out your way.
A narrative where she may be bleeding on the sand, but is only sleeping.
A narrative where the person meant to be you isn't cowed, isn't crowned, isn't left lying on the alter of dramatic arc.

— - —

This book is a guide meant to lead you through the songs and their sources. If you're familiar with the subjects already, this isn't quite necessary, you've already walked into that world and can inhabit it again, albeit from a different perspective. Still, it's unlikely you have read, watched, played everything I have and remember it the same way, so I want to give you a door in. Just in case.

(Thanks for reading.)

"The heroic gesture of woman is betrayal: its influence on the course of events is just as great as the slaying of monsters. With the monster slain, an impurity lingers on to dog the hero…
The effects of woman's betrayal are more subtle and less immediate perhaps, but equally devastating. Helen provokes a war that wipes out the entire race of heroes, ushering in a completely new age, when the heroes will merely be remembered in verse. And as a civilizing gesture, woman's betrayal is no less effective than man's monster slaying. The monster is an enemy beaten in a duel; in her betrayal, the traitor suppresses her own roots, detaching her life from its natural context. Ariadne is the ruin of Crete, where she was born; Antiope dies fighting the Amazons, her own subjects who were faithfully rallying to her aid; Helen leads the heroes she has loved to their downfall; Medea forsakes the country of sorcery to arrive, at the end of her adventures, in the country of law, Athens; Antigone betrays the law of her city to make a gesture of mercy toward a dead man who does not belong to that city. Like a spiral, woman's betrayal twists around on itself, forever rejecting that which is given."

PAGE 69. Calasso, Roberto. *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony.* 1st American ed., Knopf, 1993

"With these four songs I am performing at the closing gathering of this quarter I have explored themes of examining, rebelling against, and reinterpreting the portrayal of women and queer people in myth and fiction. The first two songs are inspired by Calasso's *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* and

continued page 9

Wife of Ruin
Walking this strict, straight line
Sure, I'm scared,
To touch on the divine,
To lay this pain beside…
It's patterned into my mind
But I've strayed,
I've strayed too many times,
To set the thing aside

I want to lay,
To lay this pain on backwards!
I want to twist it over,
I want to see it reversed
I want to portray
Woman more than the betrayal!
The blood beneath the nails…
The iron before the male

If it's the myth
That's made by man
Then it's the man
Who picks the knife
If it's the god
Whose gaze does graze
Then it's the girl
Who takes his eyes
Walking this strict, straight line
Sure, I'm scared,

it's funny, i did want to move away from the betrayal, but in the end the betrayal means everything to me

still, it's not the betrayal is it? if you never deserved that allegiance, if it was only assumed if this is striking back isn't it revenge?

appropriate and détourn while addressing themes of

bucking the author,

reclaiming tropes/

narrative, and

the desire to rewrite/détourn/turn over.

remain on the walls of Pompeii is an image of celestial love.

Mythical figures live many lives, die many deaths, and in this they differ from the characters we find in novels, who can never go beyond the single gesture. But in each of these lives and deaths all the others are present, and we can hear their echo. Only when we become aware of a sudden consistency between incompatibles can we say we have crossed the threshold of myth. Abandoned in Naxos, Ariadne was shot dead by Artemis's arrow; Dionysus ordered the killing and stood watching, motionless. Or: Ariadne hung herself

in Naxos, after being left by Theseus. Or: pregnant by Theseus and shipwrecked in Cyprus, she died there in childbirth. Or: Dionysus came to Ariadne in Naxos, together with his band of followers; they celebrated a divine marriage, after which she rose into the sky, where we still see her today amid the northern constellations. Or: Dionysus came to Ariadne in Naxos, after which she followed him around on his adventures, sharing his bed and fighting with his soldiers; when Dionysus attacked Perseus in the country near Argos, Ariadne went with him, armed to fight amid the ranks of the crazed Bacchants, until Perseus shook the deadly face of Medusa in front of her and Ariadne was turned to stone. And there she stayed, a stone in a field.

No other woman, or goddess, had so many deaths as Ariadne. That stone in Argos, that constellation in the sky, that hanging corpse, that death by childbirth, that girl with an arrow through her breast: Ariadne was all of this.

– Calasso

"Theseus has no particular reason for deserting Ariadne. There wasn't another woman. It was just that she slipped his mind for a moment, a moment that might be any moment. And when Theseus gets distracted, someone is lost. Ariadne had helped the Stranger kill her half brother with the bull's head, she had left the family palace, she was ready to wash Theseus's feet in Athens, like a slave. But Theseus has forgotten, he's already thinking of something else…

When Dionysus appeared, sham and seductive, too punctual, too merry, Ariadne sensed that somehow Dionysus and Theseus weren't rivals it all, but accomplices."

PAGES 16-19, *Cadmus and Harmony*

Wife of Mischief
I won't be left behind
I won't be buried for the dozenth time
I'm saying, I won't die!
I'm going to live without the starry sky

i said, "you think
that because you're a god, you deserve everything
so you demand love.
but even gods are human in this regard;
even even you cannot steal devotion.
if, truly, you deserved love
it would be your first love's hand you took, not mine.
oh, but dionysus, my husband, where is that boy?
long gone, gored by a bull so beautiful he couldn't help
but try to ride it?
so i thought.

you were just children then.
so was i.
if nothing else, we are the same in this;
the bull took everything from us.

i think about that all the time."

So spare me your mysteries!
You fatal jewelry…
Your wreathes,
Your hands, that reach down to me
A beast
Who claims he loves me truly
I won't be fleeced
I'm leaving you, see?

I won't be left behind
I won't be buried for the dozenth time
I'm saying, I won't die!
I'm going to live without the starry sky

Wife of mischief (Wife of mischief)
Daughter of trouble (Daughter of trouble)
Sister, misfit (Sister, misfit)
Devil in the eyes of a devil (Devil in the ARMS of a devil)

I won't be left behind
I won't be buried
And if this ruin's mine…
It's what I've married

I won't be left behind

"a myth in print is dead" i wanted
my own version, heart beating
i wanted to respond to the story
i wanted to argue

I won't be buried for the dozenth time.

"Somehow, the two friends—perhaps due to their own divine parentage—got the notion that each should marry a daughter of Zeus. Now middle-aged, Theseus chose young Helen, the adopted daughter of King Tyndareus of Sparta and sister of Castor and Polydeuces. The two friends had little trouble abducting Helen, who was just 10 or 11, from Sparta."
Classical Mythology: Midlife Crisis: The Abduction of Helen. https://www.infoplease.com/language-arts/mythology/classical-mythology-midlife-crisis-abduction-helen. Accessed 25 Oct. 2017.

"There was a girl in Sparta, Peirithous said, ten years old and more beautiful than any woman. Her name was Helen. Why not carry her off? When they had captured her, they shook a die to see who would have her. Theseus won." PAGE 14, *Cadmus and Harmony*.

i've heard your adultery pulled with it a line of ships and bloodshed a thousand times but how many; that your abduction was a serial offense? a face less an actor in the launch of ships. but a target. how must you have felt, in the face of insistence that ~~your heart~~ beauty is a virtue?

October 22, 2017

I said, "I have been traded between the rough and aged hands of strangers, at the toss of a coin. I have rode out strange seas, in the dark hulls of strange ships, among the gold, the skins, the other spoils of conquest. My hands have never held a stay; see how smooth my palms? I must never have felt fear in my life; see how my face remains unlined? What foul things I must never have said, never pleaded, through this mouth like a rose.

My skin refuses to weather, but the salt of the sea has left my heart tough and tanned. May a stormy horizon ever prevent your arrival, sailor. May the sun blind you that you never see my face. May you never know me. May I sew shut the next mouth that says the word 'beauty.'"

oh, helen
they've told me about you
made it out like i'd like to be like you
said, "she had
the face that launched a thousand ships"
i do not wish this
nor do i seek it.
i doubt you did… either.

oh, helen
they've told me about you
they write what they have grown too shy to speak
write "she was a young thing…"
write "sculpted and shining"
wrote like a trophy, oh helen…
you never ~~launched~~ sailed a single ship.

there is no power in this supposed control
and yet; you're blamed, (she had the face)
for all the pain that they ~~sew~~ sow (a thousand ships)
a single phrase,
that weight you never could throw
yet every warrior
acts like he's owed, oh…
(doesn't he, helen?)
helen.
they've told me about you
oh, helen…
i do not think they think.
your heart is not forgot
your hand, no longer sought
oh, helen
i'm sure you'd sail
a steady ship

people are easily confused by my name when i introduce myself verbally on several occassions, i assume to relieve the tension of having mis-pronounced a name several times, someone will say "oh! like Helen of Troy!" and remark like: should be proud but: am not proud i feel sickened

Argos lacked a clean supply of fresh running water. Before it could have one, the bloody affair of the Danaids must take place. A fifty-oared galley arrived from Egypt. With a girl at every oar. They were the fifty daughters of Danaus, the Danaids, with their father. Driven by "an innate repulsion for men," they were fleeing

forced marriages with their fifty cousins, sons of Aegyptus. And, having fled, they had chosen to return to their family's ancestral home, the place where the wanderings of their forebear Io had begun. They spoke a foreign language, and their skin had been darkened by the African sun. The old king of Argos, Pelasgus, immediately saw their arrival as an unmanageable invasion. Coming toward him were fifty women with extravagant, barbaric clothes and nomadic desert eyes, but from the left arm hole of each Danaid protruded an olive branch wound in white wool. It was the only recognizably Greek sign they carried, but it was a clear one: they were asking for asylum. And they added that, if they were not granted it, they would hang themselves. They were more specific: they would hang themselves from the statues in the temple, using the girdles from their tunics. Fifty women hanging themselves from fifty statues! What a pestilence, dense and poisonous as the muggy airs of Egypt! Better risk a war than that.

To touch on the divine,
To lay this pain beside...
The punishment set aside
For figure fair,
For hair that caught the light,
Both kept and left behind,
The horn, the stone, the knife,
The deathbed for the wife

And I want to lay,
To lay this pain on backwards!
I want to twist it over,
I want to see it reversed
I want to stand
On the wreck of desecration!
I want to desecrate him.
I'll be the wife of ruin

'cause it's the myth
That makes the man...
But I'm afraid
Of no man's knife
And god forbid
He's heaven-sent
Cause if he is,
I'll take his eyes
Oh, god forbid
He's heaven-sent
Cause if he is...
I'll take his life.

From the Rock of Argos, the ships of the defiant cousins were spotted on the horizon, coming to get their women. They were Egyptians and respected only Egyptian gods; there wasn't a shrine in the whole of Greece could stop them. Pelasgus had always hoped some sort of compromise might be reached. What if the piratical abduction were dressed up as a series of peaceful marriages? Fifty couples reunited in a huge party? In the end the Danaids gave in. But each went to her marriage bed concealing a knife. And forty-nine times that night a woman's hand plunged its blade into the body of the man who lay beside her. Only the eldest sister broke the pact: Hypermestra. She let her husband, Lynceus, escape. Throughout the bloody night, torch signals were exchanged among the hills. Hypermestra's sisters cut off forty-nine heads and went to toss them into the Lerna marshes. Then they heaped up the headless corpses before the gates of Argos.

pg. 64-66, Calasso

see, it's not just the act (betrayal); it's the pains leading up to it, it's the acts left out in it's retellings...

"Clytemnestra, killed her over my body, yes, and I, lifting my fists, beat them down on the ground, dying, dying, writhing around the sword. But she, that whore, she turned her back on me, well on my way to Death—she even lacked the heart to seal my eyes with her hand or close my jaws.

So, there's nothing more deadly, bestial than a woman set on works like these—what a monstrous thing she plotted, slaughtered her own lawful husband! Why, I expected, at least, some welcome home from all my children, all my household slaves when I came sailing back again ... But she— the queen hell-bent on outrage—bathes in shame not only herself but the whole breed of womankind, even the honest ones to come, forever down the years!'

So he declared and I cried out, 'How terrible! Zeus from the very start, the thunder king has hated the race of Atreus with a vengeance— his trustiest weapon women's twisted wiles. What armies of us died for the sake of Helen ... Clytemnestra schemed your death while you were worlds away!'" PAGE 188
Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles.

"He doesn't mention Iphigenia's throat cut." PAGE 91
Andrea Lawlor, editor, et al. *The Odyssey: 24 Films, 42 Characters*. Pocket Myths, 2006.

I said, "Should you refuse us sanctuary--should you turn us away, to the sea and those 50 despised marriage beds--we will hang ourselves within every temple Argos has to offer. The wrath of the gods would surely rain upon you, then. So: do not turn us away." And yet--when still they came for us, when still I fell to that place I scrambled and clawed to avoid--I had no choice. I brought the wrath of gods upon myself, instead.
Such uproar is easily incurred. They aren't picky, but quick to pick a fight. All you need: the man who owns you, and a knife.

the second

two are inspired ~~more broadly by my own experiences as a queer person with the media surrounding me.~~" , Helena. *Final Project: Speaking on Portrayal.* 2016. let's get a little more specific, shall we

i get worried. what if this isn't real? isn't there? and i made something out of falsehood but then, it was real enough to make this, wasn't it?

several characters from series started in 1970's-1990's fit this pattern:

"exceptionally beautiful"/ the pretty boy, wing motif, light haired

(and has a dark haired counter),

- experiences physical metamorphoses
- triggers the apocalypse/destruction of all that is loved/

screws with the gender binary with their actions

or form,

is the devil/makes a deal with the devil/is consumed by the divine

specifically betrays ("i trusted you!! how could you do this!"

"it's because

i'm inhuman/so cruel/

ultimately unfit for this world"),

the world's end begins in

the water and the waters are red

Red Upon the Sails
is there blood beneath your nails?
sun casting gold upon the sails
are you waiting on an answer...
that doesn't come?

and as you're standing by the water

gods, i too have thought ~~of slaughter.~~
but i'm still waiting on an answer...
that doesn't come

and as you're standing in the water—a thousand frames i've seen a dozen times, and words i've heard before—
that this is the betrayal,
it's the blood beneath my nails
it's a train run off the rails
but i've been this way before.
we

and this is where i'd end it,
i would twist it, i would bend it
i would change the way it's written
'cause i've sung this song before

this is so difficult, i'm nervous honestly because i'm embarassed! to drag this into the academic sense i wasn't sure how but i'm trying out "being emboldened" and "speaking your mind"

but i'm not singing to you, on the page i'm singing to someone who doesn't exist, to myself

"i wrote this song while thinking about a certain trope
one that i've realized WKTD was (probably? maybe?
trying to riff on, especially with venus.

so then, i guess this song came from a strange place. i've spent many years cherishing the characters that somewhat represent me, disregarding their treatment by their creators in order to enjoy their existence. it's easy to brush off if they hurt, if they are cruel—saying, "yes, it's true! don't , don't , we bite back."

The Devil Is the Same as Me
chorus:
would you call me the devil, if you
saw it in my eyes? would you
cast me to the floor, so wicked…
i don't think i could cry, and if you
kill all your daughters, if you've no
mercy on your sons, if you
let the red-tide waters, if you
let the waters run

well, i've heard this before […]

that the devil is the same as me
and angels who would greet the sea
then come to rest down at my feet
their hair's the same, but their eyes
don't bleed

and the devil's never met her match
her eyes are wide, her chest is flat voice is cracked
and if you slept without a bat
i think you could be glad of that

but… they are often far too cruel. i see myself in
you, i hate you, i hate myself. i get tired
trying to lay claim to a version of myself

and though as a group i see us struggle to take
sometimes they are too damaged; i
so corrupted, so sharply flawed,
back these warped reflections of ourselves,
have no desire to put my hands on griffith,
for example. too far gone. too sharp. i
can joke about murder, but not this.

this song is both a joyful "yes, i'm the devil, my teeth are sharp, my eyes wide, my words bloody and my body unfit for your consumption. try me," and a "quit sharpening me, scaring me, leaving me bloodied and out of place, because i've heard this all before! you've told me this story before, i know how it ends."

i'm who betrays and i'll ruin it all, right? the monster that you let cross the threshold because you didn't quite see what it was, right? i'm just like the devil, and the devil is cruel, right?

, Helena. *the devil is the same as me (notes)*. 2016.

"Finding one's voice isn't just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses. Inspiration could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist of creating out of void but out of chaos."
PAGE 302
McLeod, Kembrew. *Cutting Across Media: Appropriation Art, Interventionist Collage, and Copyright Law*. Duke University Press, 2011.

"We Know the Devil" was pretty impactful
: think that game "detourne's religion and the religious
persecution of the queer
for the first time : really SAW this text that
reclaims, that says "i will take what you have made
of me and i will make something for myself"
: couldn't stop writing songs about what i was and how
: will use the labels you give me
: understood : was allowed to be hurt by texts and
not want to be hurt by them and take them and
twist them, and own them
SUPER related to that. im still trying to flip things over
with words + feelings. im still trying to create transformations
that heal
im still trying to create transformations
that heal

do we really have to do this?
just to raise it, must you bruise it,
god, i hate the way it's written
'cause i've been this way before
wrote this song.

and as you're standing in the water
(gods, i, too, have thought of
slaughter.)
but i'm still waiting on an answer…
and i don't think that it comes

is there blood beneath your nails?
sun sinking red upon the sails…
are you still waiting on an answer… ?

: actually had written this song before, you know. : just didn't realize until a couple weeks later. that song was called "By the Water"...

:f : let you sleep
will you just remain here,
with me
: have many tales
:f you have ears
that wish to hear
all my visions
and when the sky meets sea
speak to me, only angrily
tell me of all your troubles
as you bleed
on the sand
by the water...

i said: "i wanted to try not being afraid, but i still am. only you ever weren't. i envied that, you know? even though i shouldn't have.

don't i get to be anything else? don't i even get the chance to show mercy? i think i saw it then; teeth and eyes. terrible. a body of despair. an impossible longing.

the sanctuary in the dark. we sat, precarious, solid, on the guardrail of the balcony, on the smell of polished wood.
even though i knew how to play the organ, we sat in silence.
it's the last place anyone would look."

well, the devil is the same as me
his body's bursting at the seams
his eyes are wide, his words are mean
i'm jealous, i'm not so obscene

and the devil's never met their match

I said: "I saw you, I wanted to turn it back. I saw you, I wanted it to go another way. I too have despaired. I, too, felt it circle within me, all teeth and feathers. Don't leave, now, when there is still a chance... ! Don't shed your blood upon this sand, come back into my arms... Rosy in the golden hour. Barefoot on the shore. Lie your rusty head upon my lap, fold your gilded wings.

Did we deserve better, or did I just want it?

The end of the world begins in the water, and the waters are red. We can watch it from here. I promise."

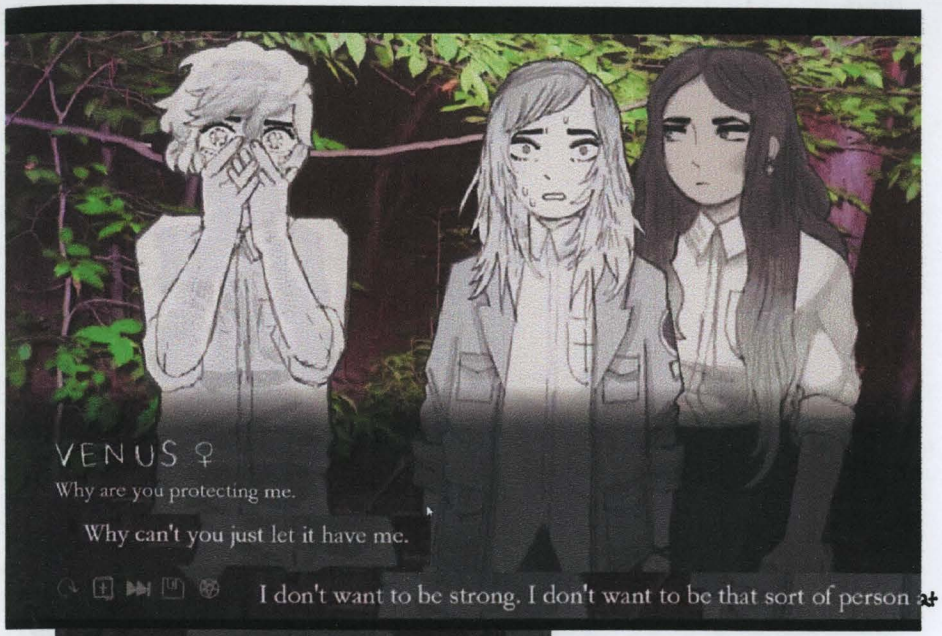
the doors are locked, the windows's latched
but if i slept without a bat
i wouldn't worry 'bout all that

'cause i've heard this, i […]

so why
make me the devil? think i…
don't bleed like an angel? think i like
sleeping in the stable? think there's
blood, beneath my nails?

but why
must we be the devils? can't you…
spare a single child? can't you
let me live once wild? won't you say
that i'm worthwhile?
would you…
call me the devil?
[chorus]

well, i've heard it before.

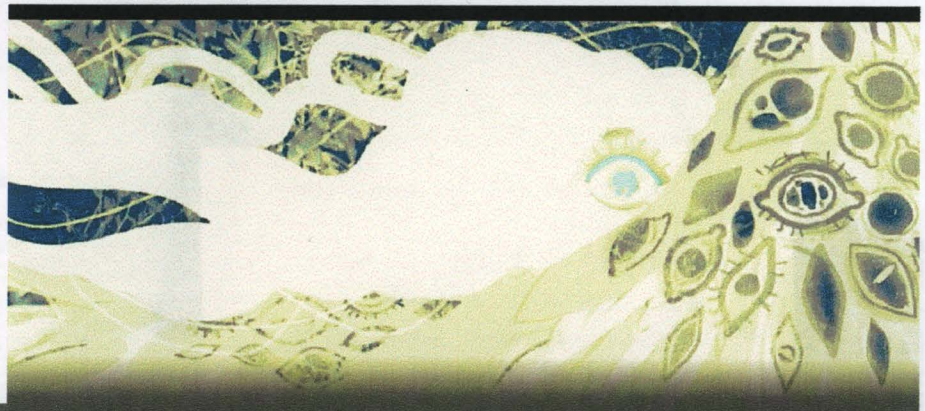

VENUS ♀
Why are you protecting me.
Why can't you just let it have me.
I don't want to be strong. I don't want to be that sort of person at all

I want to undo the division of day and night.

You're gonna to say I shouldn't give up, and there's hope, and we can all get through this...

And that's not a lie but...

It's nobody's fault but mine.



Venus reaches out to us. She has eyes to fly with and wings to see. As terrible as an angel, be afraid. That wing to see the truth and that eye to lay it bare.

The devil is lonely. We kicked out the devil and it must miss us. It keeps begging to be let back, to let it in.

And Venus did.

The devil isn't lonely; the crackling, broken radio's song is louder and more lovely every minute. We are our own company now. We asked to be let out. And we let ourselves out.

There is nothing to fear when there is two against the devil.

But we can't wait to see what they'll do against the three worst girls since Eve.

inspired by:
"The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony" by Roberto Calasso
Myths of Ariadne: sister of the minotaur, savior of Theseus, slayer of the minotaur, killed by Dionysus, abandoned by Theseus, turned to stone, betrayer, object, warrior, set into the stars for a frozen eternity
"We Know the Devil" created by Mia Schwarts, Alec Lambert, and Aevee Bee
The Danaides and their 50 knives
Berserk (the movies), (inspired by but not adoring), (I liked Griffith for like 2 hours but were I to meet him tomorrow in a dark alley I would end him by my own two hands)
Helen of Troy, her first (and lesser known) abduction, the hands of strange men
Shame
Devilman (an amalgam of the stories I've amassed from two movies, some manga, wikis, and tumblr gifs)
Neon Genesis Evangelion
The angel, the red sea, the blood beneath your nails, sun setting horizon, the bull, the horns, the curse, the blood on the sand, don't go, don't go, don't

as : opened this to work on
:t again
: pulled once, twice
many orphaned strands
of ghostly-long hair from the pages

helena ruth 2017